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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL HB 5024, "AN ACT
CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM IN
NURSING EDUCATION"**

February 9th, 2010

Good morning Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Committee. Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut. I am Mary Jane Williams, RN, PhD, chair of the Government Relations Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association.

I am here to speak in support of Raised Bill HB 5024, "An Act Concerning Educational Doctoral Degree Program in Nursing Education."

I am pleased to be able to speak in support of the development of the doctoral specialty for nurses as a collaborative effort between Southern Connecticut State University and Western Connecticut State University. CNA's legislative agenda speaks directly to the support of education from entry through advancement in the state.

It is predicted that "the nursing shortage in Connecticut is projected to be among the worst in the nation." One of the major factors contributing to the nursing workforce shortage is the lack of adequately prepared faculty for nursing education. The facts about the nursing faculty shortage are well documented. Faculty members are aging. It is estimated that 75% of the current faculty population is expected to retire by 2019. Educational settings are filling positions with part time faculty. This practice has the

potential of having a negative effect on both the program and the employee. Part time employees may not be invested in the total work of the program and the employee may not be paid for the value they bring to the educational setting.

It is also a growing problem as nursing faculty members are not prepared at the Doctoral Level. Without adequate preparation, the individuals hired into these positions will not be able to provide the level of education needed to educate nurses for the next decade. Also, if the nurse educators are not adequately prepared, they will not be able to succeed in the educational settings and reach tenure. Only 350 to 400 nursing students receive doctoral degrees each year nationally, and the pool of candidates for full time positions is limited. This lack of qualified faculty impacts the credibility of nursing within the university setting and limits those individuals who are prepared for leadership roles and /or competitive for research funding (NLN, 2005).

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing reports that nursing schools nationally are struggling to fill positions. The average age of doctoral prepared nursing faculty by rank was 59.1 years for professors, 56.1 years for associate professors and 51.7 years for assistant professors. Faculty does not reflect the demographics of the population. Only 11.5 % are underrepresented groups and 5.7% are males. In its most recent survey AACN found 45.1% of all faculty members are doctoral prepared (AACN, 2008).

The most critical reasons for not hiring faculty are reported to be 1) inability to recruit qualified faculty, 2) limited pool of doctoral prepared faculty, and 3) lack of educational experience in the pool of candidates.

We are headed toward the "perfect storm" in health care. The age of nurses, coupled with the growing demand for providers will come as we experience a huge decrease in faculty due to retirement. We as responsible citizens need to recognize the potential impact this will have on the health of the public and we need to put what few resources we have into the systems that will give us the best and most rapid return as we

try to grow our workforce. We must stop turning qualified students away from programs; we must prepare our nurses to accept leadership positions within academic settings--- it is the right initiative for the state and the federal government.